

U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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@SenatorCardin



SenatorBenCardin



@senatorcardin

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Dear Fellow Marylander:

One year ago, almost to the day, I first wrote to you about COVID-19 and the global pandemic that was only just beginning to grip our nation. My message at that time was that we all needed to ["Be Patient" and "Be Smart."](#) After what has been an unprecedentedly difficult and painful year for the nation – and over 540,000 deaths in this country alone – the need for patience and acting smart still ring true, even as more and more Marylanders are being vaccinated.

Nationwide, the U.S. has distributed more than 151 million vaccines and over 40 million adults have been fully vaccinated. As of Friday, 23.07 percent of Marylanders have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with 12.46 percent of Marylanders fully vaccinated.

I know there continues to be frustrations aplenty as Marylanders who are currently eligible for a vaccine try to find an appointment. Maryland has been distributing vaccines through a mix of state-run and/or FEMA-supported sites, county health departments, pharmacies and hospitals. [Mass Vaccination Sites](#) in Prince George's County, Baltimore, and elsewhere are helping to increase the availability of appointment times. The increased vaccine supplies from the federal government has made this possible.

Maryland currently is in Phase 1C of the vaccine distribution plan. You can check <https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/> to determine your eligibility. Some counties have created tiers for prioritizing people within Phase 1C, while some may continue to prioritize Phases 1A and 1B Marylanders before getting to 1C populations. Please make sure to check your county health department to see if you are eligible. To schedule an appointment, access the "Find a Vaccination Site" tab on the state's coronavirus page at <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/vaccine>.

For those who do not have internet access or need assistance navigating a website, Maryland continues to run a call center at **855-MD-GO-VAX** (855-634-6829) or 211 from your cell phone. The Maryland vaccination support center is staffed seven days a week from 7AM-10PM. Callers can get information on vaccines, identify providers in their area, and schedule appointments at Maryland's mass vaccination sites.

This week, Governor Larry Hogan announced that our state will move into Phase 2A this coming Tuesday, March 23. This opens eligibility for Marylanders age 60 or older to be vaccinated. One week later, on March 30, our state will move into Phase 2B, which opens appointment eligibility for anyone age 16 or older with an underlying medical condition. Two weeks later, on April 13, all Marylanders age 55 or older will be eligible as part of Phase 2C. Essential workers in food service, construction, financial services and other infrastructure-related roles also will be eligible as part of Phase 2C. By April 27, Governor Hogan expects that all Marylanders age 16 or older will be eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

This can get more than a little complicated, so please check here <https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/> for more information on Maryland's vaccination phases. If you have further questions, my website also includes more information on our state's vaccine resources at <https://www.cardin.senate.gov/coronavirus/maryland-vaccine-resources>.

Governor Hogan's plan will significantly increase the number of Marylanders eligible for a vaccine over the coming weeks. I know that many of you have been waiting patiently for your vaccine appointment or to be eligible – I know how frustrating the process is, but I just want to urge you to be patient hopefully a little longer. Vaccination rates across the country and Maryland have been increasing steadily. Daily vaccination rates have doubled since January to more than two million daily nationwide and more than 44,000 daily in Maryland. These increases are a testament to the Biden administration's progress as the country looks to meet the challenge made by [President Biden](#) that every adult be eligible for a vaccine by May 1.

Please keep in mind that if you are eligible in any part of Phase 1 and you have not received a shot yet, you have not missed your chance. You are still very much eligible and should try all means to schedule an appointment as soon as possible. As Governor Hogan said, Phase 1-eligible residents will continue to be prioritized for vaccinations.

As more and more Marylanders get the COVID-19 vaccine, it's worth repeating that we all still need to be cautious. We may not need to "hunker down" as much as we did a year ago or during our worst spikes in infections, but the virus is still out there. In the last week, 6,258 Marylanders tested positive for COVID-10 and 91 died.

Dr. Anthony Fauci [testified](#) before the U.S. Senate this week that he is “*concerned that if we pull back in our enthusiasm for the fact that vaccines are rolling out, and things look good, if we pull back prematurely, we may trigger another surge. And that would really set us back in all the things that we’re trying to do.*”

Even once you are vaccinated, I urge you to continue to be patient and be smart. Remember, the COVID-19 vaccines are not 100 percent effective, and the vaccines may be less effective against certain variants. There also is not yet clear-cut research and data on the transmissibility of COVID-19 by fully vaccinated people.

For your own health and for others around you, please continue to wear a mask in public (it’s still mandated in Maryland!) and continue to wash your hands regularly and keep a safe distance from others outside of your household for whom you do not know their vaccination status.

As I said one year ago, we are all in this together. The impact of this virus has been all-encompassing and has changed permanently how we view our communities and our world. In many ways, it has made us appreciate the relationships that are important in our lives and the people with whom we so urgently want to embrace, give a high-five or share a meal.

Thank you for all you have done to get Maryland through this public health crisis.

Stay safe.



Ben Cardin